



Rev. John Phalen
Oral History Transcription
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Interviewed by:	George Garner
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Summary:	The Reverend John Phalen is an ordained priest in the Order of the Holy Cross. He was one of the founders of La Casa de Amistad, a Latinx youth and community center in South Bend's west side.

00:00:01 [George Garner] So, I'll start formally by saying my name is George Garner and I serve here as the curator for the Indiana University South Bend Civil Rights Heritage Center. Its Monday, August 27, 2018 and we are at the Civil Rights Heritage Center and I really am pleased and proud to welcome a person whose name I've heard over and over again, but I've not had the pleasure of meeting yet. So, if you would for the record please state your name.

[John Phalen] Okay, my name is John Phalen, I'm a Holy Cross priest and I was ordained in 1974.

[GG] Um, father, I want people – I wanna understand a little bit about your life history and your story and again this is your story and only your story. So, nobody but you can answer it best.

[JP] Okay.

[GG] Can you start just by telling me when you were born and where?

00:00:46 [JP] Okay, I was born on the 8th of October in 1947 in Waterbury, Connecticut and I come from a big family, I'm third of seven in the family. An Irish American family although we're several generations removed from Ireland but very much identified with Ireland and I graduated from Notre Dame high school in Bridgeport, Connecticut which was my first contact with the congregation of Holy Cross. So, today I'm a member of the congregation of Holy Cross, I felt the call to be a priest while I was at – in high school and I was encouraged to include Holy Cross on the list of communities I was gonna visit. So, I remember visiting a community that was about home missions, in other words always in the United States but always in a mission situation.

That is to say a place that doesn't have much church presence or perhaps a place where people are experiencing prejudice and so on. Um, hands – another community that was totally about foreign missions and so the priest that was dealing with me is from the congregation of Holy Cross and he said, "well why don't you try Holy Cross too because we have both of those." So, as it's turned out I've done both of those, I'm working now in Peru and I've been there four years, but I spent many years here – probably a total of 10 years in South Bend. Even before I was ordained starting – before I was ordained and then eight years as an ordained priest.

00:02:22 [GG] I wanna get to that cause I – my understanding is you came to South Bend to study at the University of Notre Dame, right?

[JP] That's right, I went to Stonehill college first, which is another Holy Cross University.

[GG] Where is that located?

[JP] Massachusetts. And so, when I graduated from there, I felt like well I needed more exposure to more people, everybody I knew was an Irish Catholic from Boston, you know? So, I decided to go to Peru, and I came out here right after my graduation in June. I came out that summer to talk to the guys at Notre Dame and say, "could I go with one of your programs, I know you have programs that go to Latin America, I wanna go to Peru." We were an Eastern Province at that time so there were two different provinces – three different provinces really in the congregation of priests. So, there was the Indiana province which was the largest, and I was in the eastern province which was also a southern province. So, the answer was no you have to wait you have to be matriculated at Notre Dame if you're gonna participate in their program at that time and so that's what I did.

00:03:27 I waited until I had my first year here in the MTH program, master's in divinity which in my time was a Master of Theology. It's a three-year professional program, that's what I was in. So, after my first year in that program I had arranged to go to Peru and my plan up until that time was to be a professor of literature at one of our universities. So, I was studying literature, my degree – my undergraduate degree is in literature from Stonehill with a minor in Philosophy. Well as it turned out when I went to Peru, we were in Cartavio in those days, we're not there anymore and at that point I spent a couple of months – and like a lot of programs at Notre Dame it changed my life – it changed my vision of what was in the future.

I decided – I got a lot more interested in Hispanics and so came back here, I knew there was a Hispanic community here but started getting more involved in it by going to Saint Stephens parish, doing some music at Saint Stephens parish and at that time we had some Mexican sisters working in the kitchen at the seminary and they were very encouraging saying, "oh your Spanish is getting better, why don't you come and help us with music at the parish." And beyond the music I started getting involved in everything else so then when I was a deacon I started functioning as a deacon in the community. One thing led to another.

[GG] So your time – so okay, what year was it roughly that you started here and then took that year in Peru?

00:05:04 [JP] It must have been, it was 1971 when I went to Peru, I spent two months and came back and as I came back right away, still 71 in September, I would have gotten started with working with people in the city. That was just the music at first, but I got to know the people some and the people were very open and very encouraging. It turned out that they had had seminarians working with them before, there was a whole ministry that took place before my time, which was Father Forestall. Father Peter Forestall was a Spanish teacher at Notre Dame, very interested in the Hispanics coming here and the migrant stream.

00:05:54 So, he used to work with them on weekends and do weddings and first communions and hear confessions and have mass in four different parishes in this area because they were bounced around. They really, I conclude that they weren't all that welcome because you know, why did they get bounced around? They were in Saint Stanislaus on western, they then went to Holy family I believe, to another one I can't remember the name of it and then they finally settled at Saint Stephens which was a Hungarian parish. So, it was very unique to work at a Hungarian and Hispanic parish. They both begin with H and that's where the similarities stop, you know in terms of background of each group of people. So, they were using the Hungarian parish as a place to have their liturgy but there really wasn't a place of their own, you know they had been kinda borrowing different parishes to operate.

00:06:52 Most of them came from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, so they were in the migrant steam going to Arkansas going to Florida, coming up here to the Midwest and you know often people at Notre Dame ask me "well what are Hispanics doing here" and I say, "well you obviously don't know where you live. You live in the middle of the breadbasket." You know, there's all kinds of crops that needed picking here and that's what brought them here. So, some families settled in, they all had relatives back in Texas, which used to be Mexico so that's how they got here. They found out there was a good job here, whatever they came up and so families began settling here. So, um –

[GG] When you were here where did you live?

[JP] When I was here, I lived at Morrow Seminary until I could get away. I was at Morrow Seminary, which is like a hotel, it's a beautiful facility at Notre Dame on the lake and it's a different world than here on the west side. So, three of us, Father John Corchmar, Father Tom Lemus and

myself asked permission to have our third year on the program here on the west side. So, I lived on Birdsell Street and it was a black neighborhood but very close to the Hispanic neighborhood and from Walnut Street on out and we wanted to live near the people. And we wanted to live more simply than how we lived at Morrow.

00:08:20 So, that was something that could be accomplished, we convinced one regime that we could do it, that was Father Putts, but then Father Putts was changing that summer so then we had to do it all over again for the new rector that came in, his name was Father Jim Kelly and he too admitted that it looked like we were okay with this. This was something that we really wanted to do, all three of us wanted to work with Hispanics. As it turned out Father John Corchmar worked with the Hispanics in Milford and that was a converted gas station which became a chapel and Father Tom Lemus and myself worked here at Saint Stephens. So right away we needed to find another place because there was no place to gather. We had the church for Sunday mass but in a parish there's a lot more to do.

00:09:13 So, I began looking for a house, and at the time I think – what was his name, there was a Holy Cross priest who had a special program for housing, he's since left the congregation. I don't know if his name will come to me, but anyway he had a program for purchasing a house and we purchased a house on Warren Street to be the youth center. So, we had youth come in there and from the beginning it wasn't just a parish youth center, it was anybody who wants to come youth center. So, we had Hispanics and blacks and Polish with us in our group – it was predominantly Hispanic. It was the first youth group that was really – had Hispanics as the principal group.

[GG] What was the name of that?

00:10:02 [JP] It was called La Casa De Amistad. 525 Warren Street and so we operated out of there for a number of years as – in a sense an extension of the youth ministry of the parish for Hispanics. We weren't official in the parish until 1980, that is to say assistance of the pastor until 1980. Before that we were set up as vicars for Spanish speaking and in other words special assistance to the bishop of Fort Wayne South Bend to deal with Hispanics in the South Bend area.

[GG] One of the things I wanna ask too is, what was it – I mean so there was a growing Hispanic/Latinx population here starting in the 1930s.

[JP] Right.

[GG] But really expanding from the 1950s through to the 1970s, um, what was it that led you to that population of people?

00:11:03 [JP] Well, I became familiar with them through the Mexican sisters at the seminary. It turns out the Mexican sisters were much more on the ball than I thought, you know they were counseling – the whole time we were working here they were counseling the women up at the seminary, you know? The women would go up there with their problems and whatever and the sisters would counsel them and encourage them to come to us. We were unaware that this was going on, but you know the sisters were there to, to cook for the seminarians but they had a very pastoral bent and they really wanted to be of help to their people. We ended up hiring two of them eventually on the pastoral team here because they were so good at this.

00:11:49 So, they were the ones who introduced me really to the community here, but there was a way in which seminarians had always participated – there was a bus at one time before I was here. Father Forestall had a bus and he would invite the seminarians to come down and help as catechists with the Hispanics wherever they were – at whichever of those four parishes they were located. A lot of seminarians were involved in that, I know Father Tom Lemus was involved as a seminarian in that and others who went to other places were involved in it. So, that kind of contact – there were only two options in those days for pastoral work here if you were studying to be a priest. You had two options as a seminarian, you could come here and work with the Hispanics or you could go up to the first town in Michigan –

[GG] Niles?

[JP] Niles Michigan, Saint Marks I believe it is.

[GG] Mhm.

00:12:43 [JP] And that parish had catechists tambien and so you would go there and teach. I spent one summer up there, probably the first of my summers and then after that the rest of the time – or it wasn't a summer it was during the year. Must have been my first year. I was teaching religion and once that was over, I went to Peru. And after I went to Peru, I just got in this whole area of working with Hispanics here and finding that they didn't have their own priest. They didn't come with their own priest there wasn't another group of people who was tending to

them. But there was a history of having done this through Holy Cross through Father Forestall and he had a sidekick whose name was Mr. Ritz, I don't know what the first name is, but his son is Father Ed Ritz, who's about 80 something here now.

00:13:35 Better get his testimony because he has, I think the bulletins, the Sunday bulletins from all the masses that the Hispanics had, he said, he told me then that he had kept that from his father. His father is long deceased but Edris who became a diocesan priest and somewhere where they house retired diocesan priests in this area. I believe he had access to that, and I was always hoping he'd give me that, so I could learn from what was happening way back when, maybe trace some of the original families and so on. So, in terms of how I got involved it was the Peruvian involvement. It's interesting that I'm now in Peru.

[GG] (laughs) I was thinking the same thing.

00:14:24 [JP] You know, and I've had many visits to Peru over the course of what I've done in the states. So, as it turned out I was correct in being unsure about home missions, foreign missions because it's all become of one piece for me and I've worked with a lot of Peruvians in the states before I ever went down there. So, um anyway La Casa De Amistad was an effort to reach out to the public –

[GG] Actually before we get there if you don't mind, I wanna stay on your time at Notre Dame just for a second. How many years did you spend as a student?

[JP] Three years.

[GG] Three years total?

[JP] Yeah.

[GG] Because then there was a decision there to – so the – if I'm getting the timeline correctly was your involvement in founding La Casa while a student? After a student?

[JP] I was a deacon.

[GG] You were a deacon.

00:15:12 [JP] It was 1973 and finishing up as – I must have finished up already and I was ordained a deacon and so it was October I believe that we

started La Casa De Amistad. It was a very simple thing at first you know I just asked people that I knew in the community. The Hernandez family was there for a long time, all knew Father Forestall and they had all young kids and we used to take them over to the gym and play basketball and they started a baseball team and the activities for youth run out of the place. There was no requirement that you be an Hispanic or that you be Catholic or whatever it was whoever wanted to join in and whoever was friends of these kids and so now you had half a baseball team just by having the Hernandez family, so – and they all loved baseball. And then we got into scouts and we got into just about everything that we could, but it was originally the intent was to do youth ministry there and it was interesting who appeared.

00:16:17 You know we had quite a mix of people. We started a music group that was called La Vida and that did a lot of singing around and it was a lot of public relations for the Hispanic community because the Hispanic community had no exposure really. The place was kind of – well you'd understand why there were undocumented people among them. We would know right by looking out at the group of people at mass, the ones with cowboy hats usually come from Mexico and the others come from the valley. They had more confidence in themselves and they speak out more and they're more leaders because they don't want to hide in the background but there was that – and there was even friction between the two groups because one group would be already established and in the good old American way, once you're already established you wanna close the door for everybody else.

So, we really struggled with that kind of thing, you know to be open to everybody and give everybody a voice. But it helped that we didn't come from one or the other group ourselves you know; we were Anglos that were getting involved in this and we were you know pro everybody. So, there were quite a few things going on at that time, you know it was a Hungarian parish that was really – the population was going downhill, was older, others had gone off to other parishes. They needed us as much as we needed them you know, so it was 1980 that we took over at Saint Stephens because Monsignor Peterson, a Hungarian retired and so we were asked to take over that parish and become a more official parish using the facility there.

00:18:04 [GG] Um, so, you're often credited as the founder of La Casa, but of course no one person does it alone.

[JP] That's right.

[GG] So I'm just wondering what you can tell me about some of the other people who were part of that founding. You said it was a (inaudible).

[JP] Sure. Benito Salazar would have been the first one, you know Benito, has he given you any –

[GG] Yes.

00:18:26 [JP] Um, and he's wonderful, I saw his son yesterday give this, I saw it on the internet, he's gonna get a house for habitat for humanity and stuff, he and his wife. And he gave this wonderful speech about how great it was and doing all the sweat equity for it. I felt so proud of him you know I remember this little guy who grew up and he's just like his father in terms of commitment in the community, you know generous, hard worker all that stuff. It's interesting because Bennie's the youngest in his family of about – I don't know if there were a dozen, I don't know how many there were in the family, but he's the youngest and the one everybody depends on, you know. And he's got a big family himself so – and then his daughter Becky yesterday read the first reading in Spanish for the final profession that we did over here. She has an MDV too, she was a little girl scout in La Casa De Amistad years ago, that's how I remember her.

[GG] Then she became an executive director

00:19:27 [JP] Correct, yeah so, she was a member of the notorious girl scouts of America who ate all the cookies. (laughs) Boxes of cookies came and they said, "This is great," took the boxes, brought them home and everybody ate them. Then we owed a lot of money to the girl scouts of America. So, to see her come along and see her get involved and Bennie Jr is talking about how he met his wife at La Casa De Amistad and telling this to this group and then Carter was there you know, just a wonderful thing to see happen in the city, wow this has really come a long way.

[GG] Right. What about some of the other local organizations at that time? Relationships with them? El Centro was still active at that time, right?

00:20:19 [JP] That's right yeah and I believe it was – and my memory might be wrong on this, but I think it was Manuel Garcia, I think Ramon Rodriguez was involved in that too. Both of those were leaders in the community at that time and they provided assistance more in terms of

social works for people. I wasn't too involved in it really, but I knew both of them and respected them I think they were good at their time for working with the community. Especially the communication work that Ramon Rodriguez did, you know he had a Spanish radio program that was unheard of to have it here and everybody on a Saturday listened to that. You know and got their news on and dedicated music –

[GG] What station was that?

[JP] I don't remember the – WSBT is there a WSBT?

[GG] I mean yeah WSBT is the main radio – that's both TV and radio.

00:21:11 [JP] I didn't think it was WSBT, but I'm not sure. I don't remember very well but I know he was a steadfast and that there were others that followed him as locotores um and then other organizations – I know that Ray Hernandez was somebody who was a member of the Salvation Army. He came and became a member of the board at La Casa De Amistad, he and his wife were very active in the community and it was good to have him aboard. Trying to think of other early people. Liz Conner, have you had any input from her?

[GG] I don't remember off the top of my head.

00:21:52 [JP] She's – okay, she's Cuban American and – Cuban and Mexican I believe and so she came to town as a bilingual education teacher and there was a whole thing about bilingual education in terms of the city trying to get used to that, we did some public speaking about it and trying to encourage the schools to take on the bilingual program. We weren't 100 percent successful, but it did get going and then you probably remember the name of the person who followed her as director of bilingual education.

[GG] I presume you're talking Maritza Robles

[JP] Yes. Yeah Maritza, who just –

[GG] She was one of the women we just honored yesterday at the celebrating Michiana women leaders.

[JP] Oh wonderful!

[GG] Of course Maritza passed away, but her family was here.

00:22:44 [JP] Oh good. She did wonderful work and over the course of time – Olga Villa and Ricardo Parra you know wonderful leaders in the community, Gil Cardenas up at Notre Dame, you know he was the revolutionary with the red Bandana and everything and he was always getting marches together. You know was way on the left there and kinda came around over to (inaudible) and came back. He was a student of Julian Zamora so; Julian and his wife were very active too in the community and made their contribution from the point of view of Notre Dame and training people to be in charge of Latino studies around the country. So, he was fantastic, and he was a big help in terms of just all the activities that went on in the community here.

00:23:38 Liz was director of La Casa for a while, Benito was the director of La Casa, I was for a while. We had other people, I remember somebody came up as a volunteer and I don't remember his name now, I don't think he stayed at Holy Cross, but he was a director there for a while. Mini, I guess his last name was Tom Mini or – I don't know what the first name was, but he was from Texas and he came up and spent I think a couple of years helping. The Hernandez family had a few people or at least one that was on the board. Ernie Hernandez and Ernie was paraplegic and in a wheelchair, but he was an accountant. He was very good, and he became the accountant for La Casa De Amistad for many years.

00:24:28 Then his nephew was Cedro Hernandez and he was a great baseball player, but of them had accidents, car accidents that left them – Ernie a paraplegic and his nephew a quadriplegic and he lives today on Warren Street, I see him when I can when I come into town. The bilingual education thing was kind of a public debate that we had and I became more learned in that area of bilingual education, talking about how students, Latino students can learn to read in a year in Spanish and then can translate those skills to English more rapidly than the three years it takes to learn how to read English because of the complication of the language and stuff. So, there was a lot in there, there was a lot of resistance to that. We also used to go –

[GG] What was the resistance?

00:25:25 [JP] Part of the Anglos that said “well we speak English here in America, what are we doing this for. A lot of these people speak English anyway they're just looking for favoritism.” All that good stuff that happens with bias you know toward people and you know. It was just, you'd meet that – it wasn't so surprising because people didn't know about this cultural group or the differences that were there. Most people

came to live in simple housing as campesinos and so they came to work in the fields that life was very rugged because you'd be completely depended on the troquero, troquero isn't really Spanish, it's just English panishized truck driver who was your boss when you came up here to work at some farm.

00:26:19 Bernacchi's farm for instance, if you went to work there, they'd be beholden to this truck driver who might get drunk some night and decide that you shouldn't be part of the group and they'd leave you here and go back with his crew. So, you always wanted to stay on the good side of the truck driver, the truck driver was on the good side of the owner and he had a deal there, but the truck driver I believe was making money while the workers weren't making so much. They couldn't have any disagreements or whatever. This whole area here was I don't know where it is now in terms of the percentages of ethnic groups, it was always a black area that I remember but with you know, Ontono street was where Saint Stephens was, we were living on Birdsell street, Saint Augustus was right down the street and so there was this sense of this is the ethnic side of town, you know.

[GG] And you were here too in the 19 – in the early 1970s on Birdsell Street, that was just a few years after a major uprising in 1967 as well. So, yeah that time here was –

[JP] Yeah.

[GG] You tell me more about it.

[JP] Yeah, you're talking about the uprising of blacks principally?

[GG] Yeah.

00:27:40 [JP] Yeah and I, I mean across Doctor Chamblee was kinda the anchor over there and Father Mascot and once in a while we'd get together with both of these groups you know. Maylee Johnson was a singer there who was also a community leader and there were a number of people sympathetic with the black community who weren't blacks themselves but who also encouraged them. We were always encouraging each other, we used to have these justice and peace committees on, in Holy Cross, you know Holy Cross is made up of a lot of educators who know at the institution there. But a lot of other educators who educated in different ways, mostly in parish settings, but in any institutions, people get involved in social work, people get involved in justice work.

00:28:30 So, we used to get together with each other for many years there was a Holy Cross Hispanic ministry committee that we started in the early 70s and we had some encouentros we called them. Meetings in Texas and in other parts of the country to talk among ourselves, priests, brothers and sisters of holy cross and that's actually two different congregations or actually its four. Three congregations of women and one congregation of men and everybody had representatives in it, anybody who was working with Hispanics in their particular areas, and we used to have the meeting in a particular geographical area, and we'd go there, we'd visit everything that was going on. We'd give some feedback about we'd suggest about what could be done better, because we had no professional group to belong to you know?

00:29:23 So, for years and years we did this, it only recently stopped meeting I believe. I lost contact with them now that I'm down in Latin America, but we had people join us from Latin America and we visited every place Holy Cross had around the country. See Holy Cross is educational – were educators in the faith but it's also, we're of auxiliary service to the church. So, whatever we see that's missing is what we go for. So, for instance we had several people go into work with people with AIDS because that's what happened you know, people got AIDS and so we decided well the church needs to make a response to that, lot of other people are busy with what's already established as structure so we're a religious community, we have flexibility, we can send some people in there. and that's what we've done and do to this very day and ours is that kind of thing, it's an auxiliary service, we saw a group of Hispanic people who really weren't being attended the way they should be, you know, we all of us picked up a lot of experience doing that.

00:30:32 [GG] You stayed in South Bend after Notre Dame, you worked to found La Casa De Amistad and you served as an associate pastor for Saint Stephens and –

[JP] Yes.

[GG] I think you told us a lot of those experiences already but how many years did you spend there?

[JP] I was there until 1982.

[GG] Okay. Um, is there anything that you haven't told me about that experience already? Or?

[JP] Oh there's a lot.

[GG] I'm sure.

00:31:01 [JP] That community of Hispanics at Saint Stephens grew because we took it upon ourselves to grow it. We had an office around here someplace, it was down closer to town in this section though, I forget the exact street it was on. It was across from Tippecanoe and it was the office for Catholic Charities and there they had an office for Hispanics, so a Hispanic ministry. So, we took over that office and used it while we didn't have an office at the parish so from 73 when I started, from 73 right up till 80 we were living at Birdsell, we used the parish for masses, and we used that as our offices. We didn't have several offices we just had one. So, we timed it, Tom would have it for a while, then I'd have it for a while, we worked it that way.

00:31:58 We also had sisters of the, wow they were the sisters, we used to call them the Fasnacht because they lived on Fasnacht Street but they were sisters of Saint Joseph of the third order of St. Francis, we used to say once removed of the left tabernacle door but anyway it was really sisters through saint Joseph through the order of Francis. They helped us a lot, they were part of our pastoral team in the early years, eventually we got two other Carmelite sisters from Notre Dame to be assigned with us as well. We always worked in terms of a team and as I started to tell you about the La Casa team, that was a separate team but some of them were on the pastoral team for the parish. Benito became a member of our pastoral team, paid member of our pastoral team for the whole parish besides being director of La Casa and he was a great leader and his time still is and super active and a lot of things. We owe a lot to his leadership.

00:33:05 In the pastoral team we also had brother Terrance Burrencamp (?) who is now deceased, he did a lot of work in the prisons and what we would do in terms of recruiting people would be, I used to go down to Memorial Hospital and the most important person in the hospital is of course the person who's sitting behind the counter and has access to all the people. So, I got to know that person very well, she was very helpful to me, she allowed me to come sit behind the counter and jot down all the Hispanic surnames of anybody in that hospital and go visit the people, which I did. Until one day I was sitting behind there jotting names and the president of the hospital came by and said, "what are you doing there" and I said well I told him what was going on, and he says, "well I'll let you continue doing that if you become part of our chaplains team."

00:34:00 So, I said okay, what does that mean? That means a couple nights a month you have to come down, stay overnight at the nurse's quarters and when there's an emergency come anoint somebody or come work with the people who need help. I said fine I'm not against doing that that's what I'm doing here so I did that for years too, came down and spent an overnight and they could ring a bell, I don't know how they were notify me about some family that had their crisis going on and that kind of thing. So, we would recruit from the hospital and say – we weren't trying to change anybody, if they were from another religion, we would connect them with their religion, if they were Catholics and in town didn't know there was a Catholic community here that's what we were looking for. So, we'd tell them when the masses were, we'd tell them what the activities was for the youth, all the activities were going on while the youth activity was going on.

00:34:52 Gradually La Casa was becoming this what it is today, kind of an outreach center for everybody, we added some wonderful counselors, Manuel and Grace Tries who were Puerto Rican and they came as trained counselors from Notre Dame and really helped us a lot with the married couples, family situations, with people who needed counseling. Helping people getting into addiction programs. It became this all purpose, everything for people who were Hispanic, especially new people coming to the town. Others who helped us in the parish, Magdalena Lopez and her husband Guadalupe Lopez were in my mind they were both saints, they're both deceased now, they lived on Walnut street whenever we had a new family come into town we didn't know what to do with them, they just arrived here they had no relatives, they don't know anybody in town.

We would call up Nena as we called her, and she would say "oh bring them over, they'll join us." They owned several houses in the area that they rented out and they'd have a house that was unoccupied at the time and they'd give them this house for as long as they needed. They raised several families themselves while I was here, you know there was this tremendous generosity, she was herself an orphan as a child and so could not stand to have anybody without a house. They were just amazing to me; sorry I get emotional about her because she was just a fantastic help to us.

[GG] I've heard her name mentioned several times in much the same way.

00:36:43 [JP] Yeah, and now she was this loud singer at the parish, and she would always say, "Someday we're gonna fill this church with Mexicans! You know that!" And I'd say, "Okay, if you say so Nena." She'd sing loud because there weren't that many singers there and whatever, but you know, little by little year after year the community grew large. We had a group called the ushers, the ushers were the ushers at mass, and they were a men's group and they would help us with other activates you know we'd have festivals. We used to have in Saint Stephens a festival that was combination of everybody, many Hungarian things and Polish and Belgium because there was a Belgium church on Thomas, there was a Polish church –

[GG] Where was the Polish church?

00:37:25 [JP] I forget the name of it, it closed but the Belgium's hopped over to the Hungarian church and that was at Saint something or other, maybe people from Saint Stanislaus well there were Polish in every parish and so there were polish and Hungarian parish too, Hungarians as well so they'd all have their own food and they'd all have their own dances with outfits and there'd be of course Mexican things and there'd be a booth for Pepto-Bismol. You know you'd go try everything and it'd be a parish festival that would be a fundraiser and it was very good for unifying people to discovering a little bit about each other's culture and all of that.

[GG] At this point when you left Saint Stephen is that when you left South Bend?

[JP] Yes.

[GG] And to go?

00:38:17 [JP] I went from here to Waterford, New York to – first I had a sabbatical semester off where I went to Fairfield University to continue my education in Psychology and Theology. There was a Jesuit university, I lived in Bridgeport for that semester but then after that I went to Waterford, New York and did five years of work as an assistant director of Novices. So, Novices are people who are studying to be priests, it's kind of the boot camp for religious life here, learning all about the constitutions, the congregation, the vows. So that's the work I'm down now down at Peru, is formation work so that's where I went.

[GG] But – though you were out of the area at the time, I presume news of the fact that Saint Stephens was torn down in 2003 reached you and it impacted a lot of people. Did you have any feelings?

00:39:15 [JP] Oh sure I mean, it's just hard to stand on that corner and there's nothing there and you say wow so much went on here, it doesn't look like it did, you know? But it doesn't mean it didn't happen, it just means it happened in this place and now the people are – I could envision them marching up the street with an image of Guadalupe and going to Saint Adalbert's, both Father Tom and I did a lot at Saint Adalbert's because we went up there to the school and we would have mass there and we'd get a stipend for doing mass. We'd come back and so it helped us financially, but it also helped us in terms of our relationship with the Polish community. So, I have to tell you this one day we went to talk to Father Gene, who was the pastor and we said "Father Gene we've been coming here to mass with the school of children in the morning, we'd like to know if we can use the school for our CCD program, our religious education program in the afternoons." And he said, "Well, I have to ask Sister Arthur."

00:40:17 So, he calls up sister Arthur who always was like a field sergeant and she always spoke real loud over the phone, so we could hear her over the phone and he would say "Now Sister Arthur, Father Tom and Father John are here and they wanna know if they can use the school for the students." And she'd say well father, do you have any problem with that? And she'd say, "well father, do you need me to have a problem with that." (laughs) and he says, "oh no sister, I don't, there's no problem, fine." So, he let us do it. But it was always – you had to be so careful. The pencils had to be exactly where they were, no spitballs could be on the floor, everything had to be cleaned up because you had a very neat and clean Polish community accepting these Mexicans, the Mexican are from the campo you know, so you'd look down the street and you could pick out the Mexican houses cause they didn't have any grass in the front yard and all the Polish yards were very strictly trim and whatever, you know.

00:41:21 So, they'd say, "look at that, you can't have a house like that," just the cultural clash that you could see right in the front lawn and somebody's have their car up on blocks, front years or you know Polish neighbors would be upset about it. Just things that created a clash in what the cultures you know, there was a time too that a group of Hispanics wanted to change the neighborhood name of Pulaski park. This was a big mistake, (laughs) they wanted to make it Chavez park because there were more Mexicans playing baseball than anyone else. But it

didn't go over big and created bad feelings and it was a losing proposition from the beginning, but it was that kind of thing, you know people would latch on to something as a cause and it wasn't a time for it. So, after I was at this formation work, I went to Brooklyn, New York as a pastor of a black and Hispanic parish there in Bedford Stuyvesant, so I've always been on the tough side of town I'm feeling very at home in this area where I'm now in Lima, it's very similar to that.

00:42:33 The one thing that was different after that I did a couple years of vocation work and one major thing that was different for me was to be president of the Holy Cross ministries which lasted 18 years, and that's Father Payton's work with the family rosary but it did bring me to Latin America a lot too because a lot of it was in Spanish. I would use my Spanish in Brockton, Massachusetts too, so I worked with Hispanics in South Bend, in Brooklyn, in Albany, New York where I started with that group and then we moved the center to eastern Massachusetts. Over 18 years had a lot of exposure to Latin America, to Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru. And so, and then all around the world, we were 17 countries and I was traveling to all of them.

[GG] I presume you've had the chance to catch up with and see how La Casa De Amistad has evolved over the years and it continues to thrive, and I wonder if you have any thoughts on that.

00:43:37 [JP] I think it's great, I was thrilled to see – Olga Fernandez was the name of one of those radio announcers, her daughter and I don't remember her name right now, I think she's deceased right now, she was the director of La Casa for a while. I know that Lou Nani Tambien, he was also a director of La Casa after me and Liz Conner was, and today Sam I think does a great job. I think it's fantastic what he's doing, I didn't have a chance to visit him this time around, but I talked to them, I think he's got the right vision, I think he gets people mobilized and I'm just thrilled that the thing is still going and that it's better than it ever was as far as I'm concerned, that's why it impresses me. You know that new people come to town and we get good service and I love the way everybody cooperates with it you know, it's kind of established itself in a way that we didn't really have going for us when we started.

00:44:43 [GG] Well is there anything that I didn't ask you about your life or experience that you feel is important to share?

[JP] Um, in all the work with Hispanics here, I mean it certainly got me going on a different direction than what I was gonna do.

[GG] It's a little different than literature.

[JP] It's a little different than teaching literature although I still read a lot of Latino literature and it kinda helps me, I like figuring out a culture from a point of view of what's written about them.

[GG] Who are some of your favorite authors then?

00:45:13 [JP] Um, Galarca would be one, who wrote *Es Mi Ultima*? I forget his name now. There – you know Samora, Dr. Samora just supplied with me with all kinds of people. Gustavo Gutiérrez of course, a theology of liberation. We were writing on that, reading and writing in our synthesis seminar when we were finishing up in Notre Dame. Now, you know we know him personally, he has a lot to do with what we're doing in Lima and he's a well-respected guy, he's just fantastic theologian, I loved his books. I think he's great, you know. They're a different kind of literature, its theology, liberation theology but –

[GG] Well I think we're timing wise – unless there's anything else –

00:46:01 [JP] No I think you got an idea of what was going on here, I think Paola Gonzales is another person I should mention because Paola just died. She was early on one of the founders of the Guadalupanas in Saint Stephens, that was the women's group in Catholic church, the women's group is always much stronger than the men's group. They were very helpful in everything all the way through and she was always the representative, she was always be there if there were no other Hispanics who could make it to this thing. She always had a sense of civil presence and she would represent well her community; she was needed you know in that role. Some people got mad at her because she was always there, you know shed be in her traje and she'd be representing the Mexican and whatever, but you know why get mad at her why don't you do it yourself if you're mad you know.

If you think it's important and she was always doing that, if other people were there to do it with them, she was open to that, she wouldn't have to take all the glory you know. I remember one time I went to a funeral, we were recruiting people and everything and so when we hear somebody died who was a Hispanic surname we would show up and talked to the people there maybe help them understand what was available to them here in South Bend and one time I went and this lady I forget what her name is, but she's an elderly lady sitting there, the one person I knew in the room so I went and sat next to her and I said, did you know the deceased? She says no I said, "well what are you doing

here?" I know why I'm here; I'm representing the parish and I just want to make sure this family's aware that we're here, what are you doing here? And she looked at me and she said, "well the one who died is Mexican." And that's the way the community worked you know, anybody Mexican was a member of the community and you didn't know them, but he was welcome in your house you know, you'd bring him some food, make him welcome and its' how a community that's really oppressed in some ways deals with this. We stick together. Okay I probably told you what I had to say.

00:48:27 [GG] Father thank you so much your time.

[JP] Okay.

[Audio ends]